



POSITION PAPER

# LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND: How to include Crisis-Affected Populations in the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence

**Women and girls living in fragile and conflict affected states face some of the highest levels of gender-based violence (GBV) in the world, yet humanitarian responses consistently fail to plan for and fund comprehensive, accessible services for survivors of GBV or support longer term prevention strategies that promote gender equality. Governments, UN agencies, civil society and the private sector have a unique opportunity through the Generation Equality GBV Action Coalition to mobilise commitments and resources to dramatically increase access for women and girls to GBV prevention and response services in humanitarian crises.**

## Conflict, Displacement and Gender Equality

As noted by the UN Secretary General in the opening remarks to the 46th Regular Session of the Human Rights Council, the COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated violence against women and girls in all forms. Displaced women and girls were already among the most at risk populations on the planet. Conflict and displacement exacerbate pre-existing inequality and further constrain the social roles and mobility of women and girls and the pandemic has further increased their risk of GBV, while limiting their options to seek help. Today, 1% of humanity is displaced - more than 79.5 million people were forcibly displaced in 2019, the highest number since the Second World War. Protracted crises are now the norm. Those internally displaced remain so for an average of 10 years and refugees remain displaced for 20 years. By the time the Sustainable Development Goals are meant to be met – 2030 – 85% of those living in extreme poverty will live in fragile and conflict affected states.

**The GBV Action Coalition needs to lay out dedicated and costed funding opportunities for donors to support the protection and empowerment of women and girls in fragile and conflict affected states.**

## Generation Equality Forum GBV Action Coalition

If the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) is to deliver on its promise for game-changing results for all women and girls (and support the Sustainable Development Goal promise to Leave No One Behind), the Forum as a whole, and the GBV Action Coalition specifically, must include dedicated commitments for refugees, IDPs and other women and girls affected by conflict and crisis. Currently, GBV prevention, mitigation and response is not prioritised in humanitarian response planning and remains severely underfunded. In 2018, less than 1% of all humanitarian funding went to GBV prevention and response programming and it accounted for merely 0.5% of the total funding requested for the Global Humanitarian Response Plan to react to the COVID pandemic. This lack of prioritization perpetuates a vicious cycle of underfunding, leading to a lack of capacity and operational expertise to assess and communicate needs for GBV services appropriately in the humanitarian planning process, which in turn results in insufficient funding requests. By providing catalytic funding to build capacity for improved GBV needs assessment and programming, the GBV Action Coalition can most effectively support refugees and internally displaced women and girls at risk of GBV.

Image: Attendees of an Adolescent Girl's Safe Space in a government-run IDP camp in Nigeria listen to IRC Adolescent Girls Assistant Juliana. Andrew Oberstadt/IRC

## SUGGESTED TACTIC: INVEST IN GBV EXPERTISE IN HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCIES

### Rationale:

The safety of women and girls should be an explicit priority in every humanitarian response plan, to drive increased resource allocation to gender equality and GBV prevention and response interventions. But the lack of dedicated and expert GBV personnel, both at the operational level as well as in senior management positions, currently inhibits the prioritisation of GBV services within humanitarian planning, implementation and evaluation. The deployment of GBV experts is especially critical during the first stage of an emergency, to ensure quality needs assessments and proposals underpin HRP and mitigate risk across all sectors. However, without investment in GBV expertise and staff, organisations working with crisis and conflict affected women and girls struggle to appropriately calculate funding needs and design evidence-based quality approaches to GBV prevention and response. This perpetuates a vicious cycle of underfunding that prevents the scale up of lifesaving services, like [Women and Girls Safe Spaces](#), across displaced communities, resulting in sporadic service provision, undermining community trust and engagement.

Catalytic funding to grow the pool of GBV experts across humanitarian front line responders, including local, national and international non-governmental organisations, as well as multi-lateral agencies can break this cycle by supporting the necessary prioritisation, implementation and monitoring of GBV service provision in humanitarian programming. It will drive investment and deliver concrete results for women and girls.

Investing in GBV expertise in a crisis response will have crosscutting benefits across all four sub-themes identified by the Coalition:

1. Greater expertise and increased capacity will enable both front line responders and funding organisations to better perceive and respond to requests for GBV funding and help scale-up comprehensive, accessible, quality services for survivors in emergencies.
2. It will help prioritize GBV programming in humanitarian response planning and enable implementing organisations to plan and implement GBV prevention and response programming more effectively, creating an enabling environment for the elimination of GBV in emergencies.
3. It can support the scale-up of evidence-driven prevention programming through improved understanding of the local drivers of GBV and support risk mitigation across sectors through the better collection and use of gender and age disaggregated data.
4. Through the direct investment in local and national women-led organisations, it can provide vital support to autonomous women's rights organisations and activists working to address GBV.

### Suggested tactic:

The GBV Action Coalition should put forward a comprehensive package to help grow the available pool of GBV specialists and experts, to be funded by interested donors and other humanitarian actors to:

1. Resource and promote the use of rosters of GBV specialists, including those from local organizations, in line with the [GBV Accountability Framework](#) for example by making financial contributions to GBV surge capacity rosters. A [comprehensive analysis](#) of GBV prioritisation in HRP (2016-2018), by the IRC and Voice, found that the use of GBV specialist rosters had a positive impact on improved access to GBV experts in the field. Also resource funding for permanent positions to ensure GBV response, such as the [GBV AoR REGA](#).
2. Provide core funding to Women's Rights Organisations and Networks working in the humanitarian response in their countries and communities, to support the recruitment and training of diverse GBV experts working in all phases of emergencies and strengthen the localised response.
3. Resource trainings and experiential learning of GBV experts, including support for psychosocial care for GBV workers to address secondary trauma in line with the IASC GBV Minimum Standards.

## Participation and Accountability

To be inclusive and ensure a truly feminist process, the Generation Equality Forum must be led by Civil Society Organisations (CSO) and guided by the meaningful participation and feedback from women and girls as rightsholders. CSO participation in the Forum must take the form of leadership. It is only through CSO leadership that the Forum will be able to legitimately speak on behalf of the “hardest to reach” women and girls or put forward grounded action plans which shift power to women-led organisations of the “Global South”. IRC welcomes efforts by organizers to elevate the CSO role in the process through their official place in the GEF’s Leadership Structure. Further to this, to ensure the results adopted in Paris have broad buy-in and legitimacy, the organizers should lay out channels and pathways for how organisations and individuals, who are not part of the GBV Action Coalitions leadership, can provide meaningful feedback to the drafts presented in Mexico.



Image: A Rohingya girl draws with IRC staffer Dilshad in the IRC’s Women’s Centre in Teknaf refugee camp in Bangladesh. Habiba Nowrose/IRC

## Coordination with the Women Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Compact

IRC welcomes the decision to include adolescent girls, COVID-19 and the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda as crosscutting considerations in all action coalitions. A WPS lens on the GBV Action Coalitions necessitates the inclusion of a dedicated tactic focused on the support for women and girls in fragile and conflict affected states, as the WPS agenda highlights the gendered impact of conflict and fragility and calls for the participation of women and girls at every stage of a crisis.

In the design of its blueprint, the GBV Action Coalition should seek a meaningful link between its planned activities and the work of the [WPS-Humanitarian Compact](#). The protection of women in conflict and crisis settings has been identified as one of five thematic priorities for the Compact. Effective collaboration between the GBV Action Coalition and the WPS-HA Compact on this joint thematic priority will leverage humanitarian expertise, highlight opportunities for integrated financing and foster policy synergies across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding nexus. Taking an integrated approach to violence prevention in crisis settings provides all actors with an opportunity to reinforce their commitments across other key fora, such as the Call to Action, the Grand Bargain, the G7 and COP22.



*The WPS-HA Compact brings together key supporters and champions of the WPS and HA agendas to focus on monitoring and accountability, coordination and financing to implement WPS and humanitarian action commitments. The Compact will harness the existing extensive normative framework on WPS and HA, and accompanying institutional and coordinating mechanisms, in an innovative, global, multi-stakeholder partnership that includes governments, civil society (including those representing young women peacebuilders and young women affected by crisis), international and regional organizations, academia and the private sector.”*

**Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Concept Note, 25 August 20201**